



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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The catch of Pacific sardines -- the most important U. S. fish in terms of quantity landed -- increased 15 per cent over the previous year during the season just ended, while the canned pack showed a gain of nearly 20 per cent, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

Landings of sardines -- also called pilchards -- totaled 546,000 tons when fishing ended for the season at southern California ports on February 28. The canned pack, according to preliminary figures, was approximately 3,674,000 cases. During the 1943-44 season the catch was 473,486 tons, with a pack of about 3,150,000 cases.

Similar gains were made this season in the production of sardine meal and oil, although final figures are not yet available. The meal and oil are used in feeding poultry and other livestock, supplying necessary animal proteins and vitamins. Sardine oil also has important industrial uses.

The sardine fishery, which produces about a fourth of the total quantity of fish landed in U. S. waters, is one of the chief sources of canned fish for over-seas shipment. During the season just ended, reservation of canned sardines for Government purchase increased from 45 per cent of the pack at the beginning of the season to 55 per cent a few months later. Toward the end of the season, 100 per cent of the canned pack was being reserved for Government needs.

As in the previous year, the main obstacle to producing a pack large enough to supply all civilian and military needs was the shortage of manpower in the canneries.

The increase in the catch of sardines is believed to be the result of several conditions, of which the most important were:

- 1) An increase in the fleet through return of boats from the Navy and a program of new building which has practically restored the fleet to its pre-war fishing capacity,
- 2) unusually good weather during September, October and November, and
- 3) a phenomenally heavy and steady run of good quality sardines at Monterey and San Pedro in October and November.

In catch, Monterey gained 15 per cent, San Francisco 8 per cent, and San Pedro 39 per cent over last season.

As in the 1943-44 season, the sardine industry operated under a Government-directed war production program administered by the Department of the Interior through the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

Sardine fishing in California, center of the industry, will not be resumed until August 1, when the new season opens in the northern part of the state. Fishing is carried on during the summer months off the coasts of Washington and Oregon, where a small catch is made for reduction into meal and oil.